

I would like to offer a few observations regarding the Fiscal Year 2014 County Budget and the county executive's statements that the government has been "defined by mediocrity" and has fallen "way behind in culture, attitude and investment." These disingenuous, feckless claims are untethered from the facts.

Targeted, strategic investments that my Administration made over the past six years include a ~~new~~ Science, Technology, Engineering and Math program and a middle school parenting program at Anne Arundel Community College, increased funding for training and retraining for the Workforce Development Corporation, more than 3,000 acres of land preserved throughout the County, turf fields at every county high school, an athletic field for individuals with disabilities at Lake Waterford Park in Pasadena, colonoscopies for low-income men and women that have saved lives and post-traumatic stress syndrome funding for returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan.

The county executive has wisely decided to continue to maximize the property tax revenue permitted under the tax cap, as I did in each of my six budget years. Two previous county administrations imprudently failed to do this, thus losing millions of dollars, compounded year after year, that were lost to county coffers.

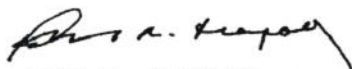
The income tax rate of 2.56 percent has been maintained, thus continuing my commitment to keep our rate the lowest in the Baltimore-Washington region. The property tax rate remains the lowest in the region, as well.

The budget has continued my priority of increasing the number of school resource officers in our middle schools. Every student is entitled to a safe and secure learning environment and hopefully, in the future, every middle school will have an SRO.

The commitment I made to include a new police training facility in the capital budget was regrettably not agreed to by the county executive. The deplorable conditions at the outmoded facility in Davidsonville, including constant problems with the heating and air conditioning system and air quality health concerns, require attention. I was pleased, however, that my priorities for a new Lake Shore Fire Station and a boat ramp at Fort Smallwood Park were included in the budget.

A deserved pay increase for county employees is included in the budget, but it should be noted that over the past six years, we reduced spending by over \$70 million, including county employee furloughs, in order to exercise the necessary fiscal discipline in a downturned economy. This belt tightening and employee sacrifice helped enable the pay raises now being offered.

While the safety net priorities of hunger, homelessness and domestic violence are continued at the same funding levels I established in the non-profit government grants program, there are certain shifts in program priorities which the Council should review, including reductions to Arundel Habitat for Humanity, the Anne Arundel Mental Health Agency, the Cisco Center Foundation, Inc., Pets on Wheels and the Wiley Bates Legacy Center. The entire grants program is funded at \$1,256,500, the exact dollar amount contained in my Administration's Fiscal Year 2013 Budget.



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